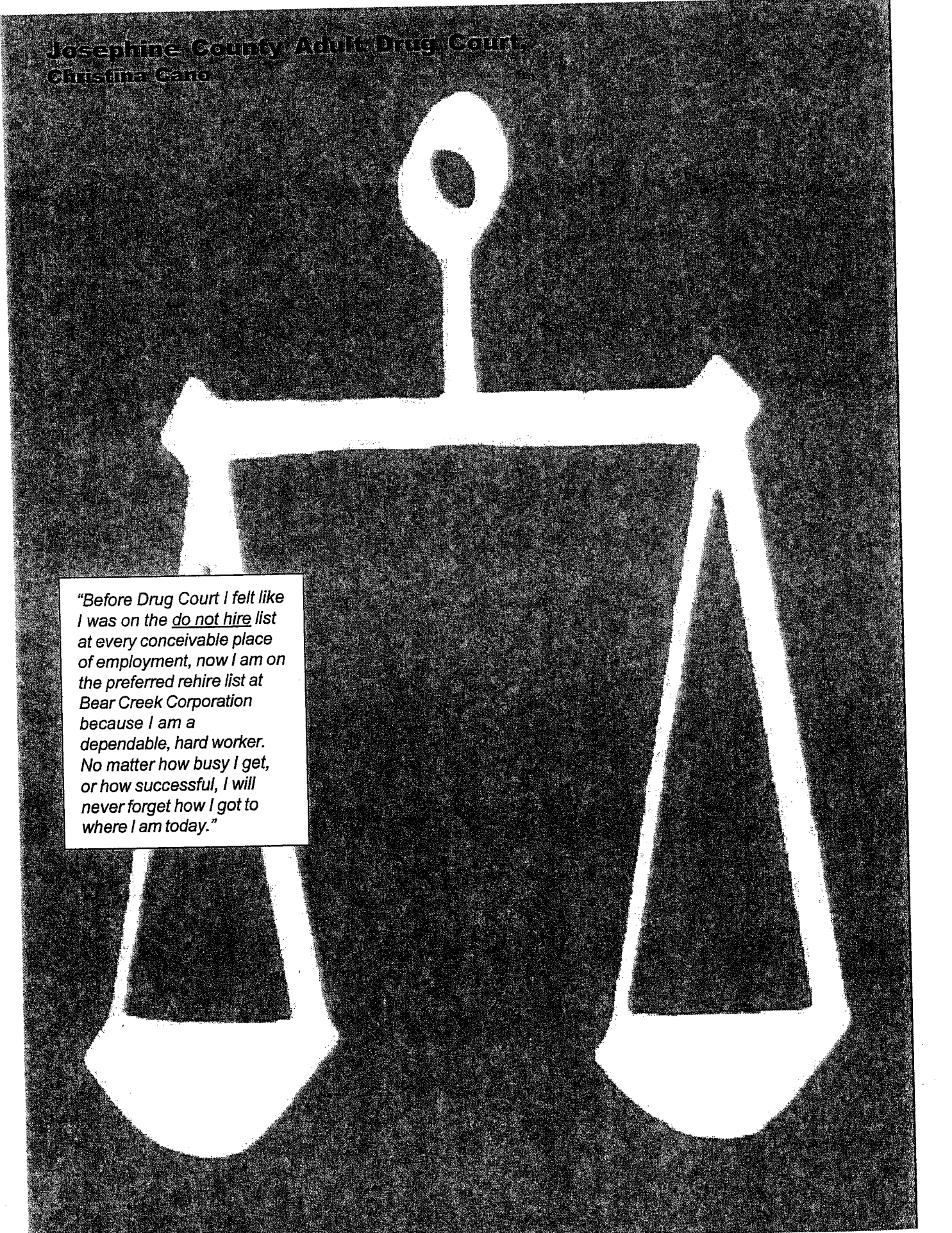


Josephine County Adult Drug Court
Christina Cano



"Before Drug Court I felt like I was on the do not hire list at every conceivable place of employment, now I am on the preferred rehire list at Bear Creek Corporation because I am a dependable, hard worker. No matter how busy I get, or how successful, I will never forget how I got to where I am today."

When someone asks me "how has Drug Court changed your life?" I am at a loss for words. It's like asking a person who was blind their whole life, but now can see, "how has sight changed your life?" Words simply cannot describe the impact it has made, nor express enough gratitude for the person, or persons who gave it to them.

Before Drug Court I was blind. Blind to a world of happiness, freedom, love and God. Blind to my gifts and talents. I was blind to the person I really was. Before Drug Court I was convinced that I would live the rest of my life on the run. I would spend the rest of my life surrounded by people who were more interested in what I could give them, than what I thought and felt. But that was ok, because I felt nothing. Over the 8 years of my drug abuse I had dulled every feeling and emotion I had except for greed, hate, self-contempt, and loneliness. But it didn't matter. Why? Because it was only a matter of time before an overdose actually took my life. And what a blessing that would have been. After four failed attempts at recovery, death seemed to be my only way out. But it didn't end that way.

Just when I was sure that there was no turning back, I was arrested for possession with intent to distribute, a second-degree felony. If convicted the charge carried a sentence of 1-15 years in the state penitentiary. If I plead guilty I would serve 1 year and spend the next 3-5 years of my life on parole. I knew that if I went to prison, I would never get out. I would never be able to stay off of drugs long enough to get through. As far as I was concerned, my life was over. I never expected a second chance.

When the opportunity for Drug Court was offered to me, I was afraid to take it. The Judge made sure to let me know that if I attempted Drug Court and failed I would sure go straight to prison. I was, after all, a first class failure. But, I was so tired. My life up to that point had been very hard. In the four months of my life prior to Drug Court I had been raped, beaten, robbed, shot at, bound and gagged, and held hostage. I had seen my life flash before my eyes many times. If there was ever a chance to change, this was it. With a shaky hand and a sick feeling in my stomach, I plead guilty to my charges and signed my Drug Court agreement.

When I began Drug Court I was in Salt Lake City, Utah. It is a huge program with around 600 participants. The groups were very large and it was pretty intimidating. The first few months that I was in Drug Court I did not do very much talking, but I did a whole lot of listening. As I listened more and more, I began to feel comfortable with the people around me. We all seemed to have the same story. I wasn't alone after all. I signed up for a poetry group, which was provided by treatment. It was not required for me to take it, but it helped me to start sharing my thoughts and my resurfacing feelings started to come through my poetry.

I was also blessed with an amazing counselor. I really liked him because he genuinely cared about me, but he made me work my program. He say in me strengths that I didn't know I had, and helped me realize them through encouragement and hard work. I always listened carefully to what he had to say, and followed through with all of his suggestions. The more I accomplished, the better I felt, and the more I began to believe that I deserved better. Three months into the program I discovered I was pregnant. I was alone and terrified. My family was in Oregon. I took my problem straight to my counselor and asked for help. I am

so very grateful to say he looked up Southern Oregon Drug Courts, and began the process of my transfer to the Josephine County Drug Court. There I would finish the last nine months of my treatment. I was hard to go from one Drug Court family to another, but I was determined to make this work. I was again blessed with a caring counselor who didn't put up with any of my crap. I jumped right back into treatment, eager to work my program. All throughout my time in the Josephine County Drug Court program, I was continuously working. I brought all of my concerns to group, and I worked them out. I always attended group with an open mind and an open heart. I did not take treatment lightly. It was life or death for me. Everyone involved in the Josephine County Drug Court program, from the Judge to the very sweet receptionist at Choices Counseling Center, showed sincere interest in my progress. If I was ever having a down day, I knew that I would always hear words of encouragement from any of the many people involved in my recovery. That is one of the many things that kept me coming back, and helped me to successfully graduate. But, even with all of my accomplishments through treatment, and all of my recognition in court, I still had a little voice in my head telling me that I wouldn't make it to the end. I would never graduate. When confronted with my paranoia I took it straight to my group. I stopped holding feelings in. If I had a problem I addressed it right away. I didn't let it sit. I knew that I could share whatever I was feelings without judgment from the group or my counselor. My time in Drug Court helped me to give myself a break, and to recognize that all of my accomplishments mattered. In the end, not only did I graduate, but also during my time in treatment I delivered a healthy 100% drug free baby girl. Since graduation my life just seems to get better and better. I have reconciled with my family. I was invited into my brother's home for the first time ever. I thought I would never have a driver's license again, and I have one. When I found out I was pregnant, I just knew that I was going to be the worst mother ever. Instead, I constantly receive compliments about how my daughter is one of the most well adjusted and happy babies anyone has ever seen. My daughter and I attend Early Head Start together, and her teacher believes that she is gifted and has to download special lesson plans off of the internet just to keep up with her. Before Drug Court I felt like I was on the do not hire list at every conceivable place of employment, now I am on the preferred rehire list at Bear Creek Corporation because I am a dependable, hard worker. I just recently began selling Mary Kay cosmetics, and I am on my way to finally being able to purchase a house for my daughter and I. But most of all, I'm happy. No matter how busy I get, or how successful, I will never forget how I got to where I am today. I stay in touch with my counselor at Choices Counseling Center, and I still attend occasional groups. I am enrolled in several parenting programs, by choice, including Healthy Start and Early Head Start. I also volunteer at Early Head Start and I am the director of our parent meetings. On top of all of these wonderful blessings and events in my life is my two-year anniversary of being clean. On April 30, 2004 I will have two years clean and I will be able to volunteer my time at Choices and other centers like it, to let other addicts know that they can change. It can be done. I'm not super girl. I'm an ordinary girl, a drug addict, who said, "enough is enough."